Final Report:

Diverting the Mainstream: Aboriginal Teachers Reflect on their Experiences in the Saskatchewan Provincial School System

Prepared for Saskatchewan Education

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Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

Using a naturalistic methodology, an intercultural team of five women researchers conducted conversational interviews with thirty-eight Aboriginal men and women who have had teaching experiences in Saskatchewan Provincial Schools. Participants= responses to the interviews generated rich narratives of the learning and working realities in cross-cultural environments.

The conversational interviews with participants and extended discussions among the research team were focused on the following questions:

$ **What are the experiences and attitudes of Aboriginal teachers in the provincial system?**

$ **What are Aboriginal teachers= experiences in working with non-Aboriginal colleagues?**

$ **What are Aboriginal teachers= experiences in working with administrators?**

- **How do Aboriginal teachers culturally negotiate curriculum?**
- **What are Aboriginal teachers= opinions about what promotes or limits them as teachers?**
- **What are their solutions to such constraints?**
- **What are Aboriginal teachers= hopes for the future of cross-cultural education in Saskatchewan?**
- **How might these be implemented?**

In keeping with a feminist perspectives, the researchers created an egalitarian interview process by establishing rapport with the Aboriginal participants so that the interviews resembled a "conversation between friends" rather than an asymmetrical relationship controlled by the researchers= questions. By valuing the Aboriginal teachers as agents of knowledge and history, the researchers took care so that their words are visible by highlighting some of their responses. In interweaving the teachers`= responses with the research team=s narrative commentary, the study becomes positioned to lead to social changes in schools.

Findings and Recommendations

This section was developed collaboratively by the research team who developed recommendations based on participants' issues and suggestions. It is important to note that there is considerable overlap between these issues and concerns.

- intercultural communication
- school climate
- roles of Aboriginal teachers

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- $ curriculum development and implementation
- $ recruiting and placement practices
- $ importance of an implementation plan

In general, Aboriginal teachers expressed their desire to have schools move away from a monocultural to an intercultural perspective, and were prepared to engage in dialogue with non-Aboriginal colleagues about ways in which this might happen. Aboriginal teachers often chose teaching as a career because they wished to transform schools into institutions where social justice is a high priority, whereas mainstream teachers may have a different perspective in choosing teaching as a career.

Issue 1: Intercultural Communication

Aboriginal teachers reported that communication difficulties created fear and isolation for them. Many felt silenced by criticism of their non-standard dialects and nonverbal communication patterns. Some Aboriginal teachers felt that their own experiences might not be acceptable for school conversations because they did not seem to fit mainstream expectations of a "professional teacher". When communication was open, it was based on respectful mutuality and on shared ownership of communication, where responsibility for understanding was taken on by on both partners in conversation. It is important for both preservice and inservice teachers and administrators to understand how we use language in different contexts and to devise ways to talk about our similarities and differences. The school system needs to encourage communication in a non-assimilationist, non-judgmental mode of discourse. Intercultural dialogues could build understanding of the philosophies and ideologies which people from diverse backgrounds bring to

their teaching.

Recommendation: Schools should take the lead in opening up the possibilities of healthy communication across cultures. All people involved in the education system must learn to recognize and value different communicative patterns, and to communicate respectfully across difference.

Note: The school system should organize cultural sensitizing of non-Aboriginal teachers, not ask Aboriginal teachers to organize this. The burden should be on the system, not on Aboriginal teachers.

Recommendation: The Indian and Métis Research Network, funded through Saskatchewan Education, could support research into intercultural communication in a variety of school contexts, and into innovative participant structures in school settings.

Issue 2: School climate

Many Aboriginal teachers experienced racism and feelings of social exclusion in their schools. It was noted that the racism and exclusion were often not deliberate, but the results of non-Aboriginal teachers' and administrators' ignorance or lack of sensitivity to cultural issues. Some Aboriginal teachers felt a pressure to conform to middle-class mainstream cultural practices.

The role of the administrator was seen as crucial to building a positive school climate for Aboriginal teachers. The school system seems to be interested in maintaining the status quo; Aboriginal voices are not listened to, even though they've been invited in. There is a desperate need to recruit more Aboriginal administrators at all levels in the system. These administrators must be

chosen for their qualities as intercultural leaders. There should be an examination of the role of administrators with respect to Aboriginal education, especially in recognizing and fostering the potential contributions of Aboriginal teachers to the school system.

The artificial constraints of school and its hierarchical organization also tend to inhibit relationship-building between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff members. Shared cultural activities may be a place to begin the dialogue about culture, and to establish relationships.

Recommendation: School policies and procedures must contribute to a school climate which values the contributions, needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people.

Recommendation: Schools must have anti-racist strategies in place.

Recommendation: School systems need to make intercultural team-building a priority. The teachers had many suggestions for team-building activities, such as retreats, camping trips and other shared experiences. It would be important to have each school plan the activities appropriate for their own community.

Recommendation: The following should be seriously considered in the selection of school and system administrators:

- ability to model excellent intercultural communication skills
- a declared commitment and record of action towards social justice
- an understanding of the role schools play within the larger society

Issue 3 - The roles of Aboriginal teachers

There is frustration and confusion among Aboriginal teachers as to their role in the provincial school system. In many cases they would like to see themselves as teachers first, and Aboriginal teachers second. However, they feel that many mainstream teachers and administrators expect them to be representatives of a generic "Aboriginal culture" rather than as people with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Both Aboriginal and mainstream teachers need to move beyond material aspects of culture to understand differences in world view. This approach would make it possible to challenge racist thinking and ideology.

There is still lack of knowledge among mainstream teachers and administrators about Aboriginal histories and cultures. This knowledge gap means that many non-Aboriginal teachers do not recognize diversity among Aboriginal peoples. This may be manifested in the expectation that Aboriginal teachers will be the resource persons for all needs and issues of an Aboriginal nature within a school. Most Aboriginal teachers expressed a willingness to help mainstream teachers with their teaching about Aboriginal perspectives and issues, but were frustrated that the responsibility for teaching Aboriginal content has not shifted over the years to non-Aboriginal colleagues.

Recommendation: Aboriginal teachers need to be treated as teachers with cultural perspectives which they can contribute to the education system.

Recommendation: All teachers in the Saskatchewan provincial education system should be involved in inservice which provide them with knowledge of Aboriginal history and current issues.

The Indian and Mëtis Professional Development Unit offer such an inservice package. Saskatchewan Education should continue its sponsorship of this initiative, and expand it to include formal certification or accreditation of teachers who complete this inservice training.

Recommendation: Aboriginal teachers should be granted time and resources to engage in cultural activities.

Issue 4: Implementation and development of curriculum

Aboriginal teachers are caught between mainstream and Aboriginal expectations, with very little clarity about how one should be "an Aboriginal teacher". They are negotiating both teaching practices and curriculum content; if there is a lack in both, this is what they are negotiating without direction. Aboriginal teachers are indeed important resources for developing and implementing curriculum and helping other teachers' access resources within Aboriginal communities. In order to carry out these roles, Aboriginal teachers need to build their own strong cultural identities. Aboriginal teachers are committed to good teaching for both mainstream and Aboriginal students; they make a profound and wide-reaching contribution to cross-cultural teaching practice. They are spear-heading cross-cultural education initiatives, despite limited supplies and resources.

Recommendation: Funding should be provided to research and document materials from which to construct locally-developed Aboriginal curricula. Researchers gathering this material will need extended contact with Aboriginal elders in community contexts.

Recommendation: School systems need to recognize and honour the work already carried out by Aboriginal teachers through the publication and distribution of publications which synthesize information about Saskatchewan Aboriginal peoples.

Recommendation: We embrace the initiative by STF and SIFC to produce Aboriginal curriculum for Saskatchewan schools.

Recommendation: Saskatchewan Education should promote partnerships across provincial and Aboriginal organizations to share information about Aboriginal resources and resource people.

Recommendation: That Aboriginal education is targeted as a focus for professional development in the same way as other curricula.

Issue 5: Recruiting and placement practices

Many Aboriginal teachers expressed concern about hiring and placement practices. Some participants felt that colleagues disparaged their hiring because of perceptions that they had been recruited through affirmative action rather than education equity policies. Many Aboriginal teachers felt that their training in Native Teacher Education Programs was viewed as inferior by colleagues and parents, although they themselves felt that these programs had prepared them well for teaching in cross-cultural and Aboriginal settings. The TEP programs provided different cultural opportunities from the regular education programs in Saskatchewan.

Once hired, Aboriginal teachers felt they had little say in where they taught. Many school systems place beginning Aboriginal teachers in inner-city schools, where there are great challenges because of poverty and limited access to support services. Some Aboriginal teachers would like to work with non-Aboriginal students; others enjoy the idea of a multicultural school.

Recommendation: That the history and goals of the TEPS as university accredited programs in Saskatchewan should be explained to teachers and the general public.

Recommendation: That Aboriginal teachers should be consulted about where they might best make a contribution to education, and that supervisors demonstrate respect for their long term career goals.

Recommendation: That support groups for Aboriginal teachers be encouraged.

Recommendation: There should be Aboriginal people working in all aspects of education in the provincial system. This may be encouraged through strong mentorship programs.

Issue 6: Importance of an implementation plan

It was emphasized over and over again by our participants that they gave support to this project on the understanding that specific actions result from the findings.

Recommendation: The research team believes that this study should be followed by a practical project based on the suggestions made by the Aboriginal teachers with whom we spoke. This team would be prepared to work with a school or school division which would support a focus on intercultural education. Such a project could support and document intercultural communication initiatives, implementation of Aboriginal content and perspectives across the curriculum, and engagement of cross-cultural teams in planning and implementing relationship-building activities.

Conclusion

The writers of this report have kept Aboriginal teachers' thoughts and opinions at the heart of our deliberations. The final recommendations based on teachers' suggestions could be used as a basis for funding decisions in Aboriginal education in Saskatchewan. Teachers have given us an honest picture of their teaching lives in this collective research. If there is truly a desire to transform Saskatchewan schools, the seeds of that transformation are to be found in these Aboriginal teachers' words. In our opinion, Saskatchewan Education is in a position to gather information about current initiatives in Aboriginal education and to pass on that information to Aboriginal teachers who may not be aware that some of the issues they have raised are already being addressed. However, there are many areas of concern which teachers have raised that are not addressed within the Saskatchewan provincial school system. It is our joint responsibility to the Aboriginal teachers of this province to take seriously their deeply considered contributions to this research.

Overview of the Report

This report honours the voices and ideas of the Aboriginal teachers who gave their hearts, minds, and spirits to this project. In this study Aboriginal teacher refers to persons of Aboriginal ancestry. This includes status, non-status, Métis, and Inuit persons. In conversational interviews, participants were given the opportunity to reflect on, relate, and portray for themselves A their journey@ in becoming an Aboriginal teacher. As a form of representation, portraying self traces life=s critical moments upon a narrative thread. It may not imply a mirroring of the past but rather a regeneration of the past which to the Aboriginal teachers was a powerful awareness. Subsequently the sharing of their teaching experiences within the Provincial School System serves as a foundation for a new vision for all Saskatchewan learners.

The rationale for the project and the presentation of the research questions precedes a brief literature review that sets the work in an academic context. The reader will discover a methodology respectful of the teacher-participants= background, cultural history, and ways of representation.

It is especially in the presentation of the findings that we have attempted to keep the teachers= words true to their meanings. This section presents Aboriginal teachers= responses to each research question along with a commentary in conversational narrative style, where the interpretations and reflections of the intercultural research team become evident. The recommendations are suggestions of the teachers themselves which the research team expanded.

Building Relations

A strong commitment to social justice, most especially to building a Saskatchewan education system based on learning partnerships between Aboriginal peoples and mainstream Saskatchewanians is at the heart and motivation of the research team. This study demonstrates that Aboriginal people are increasing in representation in the teaching profession, but remain marginalized within the educational system. Many Aboriginal teachers with whom we spoke had uplifting and hopeful suggestions on their role in the Saskatchewan provincial school system. Aboriginal teachers= insights into the current situation in Saskatchewan schools indicate their visions for the future of cross-cultural education, which is inspirational for concrete social action.

The conversational interviews with participants and extended discussions among the intercultural research team were focused on the following questions:

- **What are the experiences and attitudes of Aboriginal teachers in the provincial system?**
- **What are Aboriginal teachers= experiences in working with non-Aboriginal colleagues?**
- **What are Aboriginal teachers= experiences in working with administrators?**
- **How do Aboriginal teachers culturally negotiate curriculum?**
- **What are Aboriginal teachers= opinions about what promotes or limits them as teachers?**
- **What are their solutions to such constraints?**

- **What are Aboriginal teachers= hopes for the future of cross-cultural education in Saskatchewan?**
- **How might these be implemented?**

The Academic Context

Until recently, most research literature (Philips, 1983) has focused on Aboriginal students= experiences as they adapt to the culture of mainstream education. Education of Aboriginal individuals as teachers is relatively recent, and only a few evaluations of their experience as educators have been carried out over the last twenty years (McNinch, 1994; Baillie, 1994; Hesch, 1995). The National Indian Brotherhood=s Position Paper (1972) AIndian control of Indian education@ accelerated the training of Aboriginal students to become teachers and suggested that the education of Aboriginal learners be in hands of Aboriginal parents and communities. This paper alerted the public to the policy of assimilation as the major purpose of schooling for Aboriginal learners in Canada (Barman, Hébert and McCaskill, 1986). At the same time future teachers of Aboriginal learners are to empower their students (Cummins, 1988) affirming their cultures.

There is no doubt that the training of Aboriginal teachers was envisioned from a political stance where Aboriginal teachers were to be used as instruments of societal change (Banks and Banks, 1993). This societal change was to have two purposes. First, Aboriginal teachers were to further education amongst their own people as the foundation for developing Aboriginal self-government. Secondly, they were to be educators of a general population largely uninformed about Aboriginal issues (Barman et al, 1986). Here in Saskatchewan the hiring of Aboriginal

teachers in the provincial school system has been undertaken for more multicultural aspirations, but educational equity in the hiring and retaining of Aboriginal teachers in the provincial school system has not yet been fully realized (McNinch, 1994).

While Aboriginal teachers and their non-Aboriginal colleagues have been described in previous studies as two polarized solitudes, this research team explicitly explored the cross-cultural environments of Aboriginal teachers. Their commentaries provide an insightful as well as critical view on mainstream school culture that is inclusive of diversity. We strongly believe that this study can be utilized in developing a framework for action in improving education for all children in Saskatchewan, and in building a school system which reaches out to diverse populations and in particular is enriched by the contribution of Aboriginal teachers.

While previous studies of teaching have described teacher culture in terms of informal school organization (Hargreaves, 1994), we positioned Aboriginal teachers= narratives within the larger picture of Saskatchewan society. For this study, Aboriginal teachers with a range of teaching experiences in provincial schools were interviewed in urban and rural settings. One of the strengths of the study is placing Aboriginal teachers= narratives within an interdisciplinary context echoing the research team=s diversity of women educators.

Methodology

Research Design

This is a qualitative study, which has generated rich descriptions of Aboriginal teachers= experiences in cross-cultural teaching environments. As a research team, we attempted to present

Afindings@ without reducing narratives to a generalized list of suggestions. Instead, the complexity of the data may be more fully appreciated when interwoven as a collective narrative (Legare, 1996) between informants and researchers. We took care to present the meaning of Aboriginal teachers= experiences from an Aboriginal teachers= perspective. As researchers, we contextualized the data into own subjective personal and professional lives emanating from the participants= own life stories and professional development.

The research team consisted of five female researchers, from the cross-cultural fabric, each of whom worked with five to eight Aboriginal respondents who are employed as teachers in Saskatchewan provincial schools. The 34 teacher-respondents were known to researchers as being Aboriginal teachers working in urban or rural centres in central and northern Saskatchewan.

Researchers used naturalistic inquiry so that they could interpret and understand how participants construct meaning from the teaching world around them (Legare, 1996). Since meaning is a socially constructed phenomenon, naturalistic research was used to allow for the understanding of multiple socially constructed realities; qualities that are complex and indivisible into discrete variables (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The research team explored and combined naturalistic methods of research that utilized feminist, ethnographic, and anthropological processes. The team used collaborative conversational interviews to inquire about Aboriginal teachers' experiences as resources for understanding their cultural and professional realities. At all stages, teacher-respondents had full control over the interviews and the resulting data (See Consent Forms, Appendix C).

Familiar ways of doing research have not worked to change the conditions and opportunities for the targeted participants. Instead of validating or uncovering "truths" about

teaching in mainstream school cultures, the research team asked questions which could lead to changes in career pathways for Aboriginal teachers and ultimately lead to social justice in Saskatchewan.

Collaborative Conversations

Each of the five researchers conducted individual conversational interviews collaboratively with each teacher-participant. Conversations, based on questions prepared in advance, gave rise to unstructured interviews where teacher-participants spoke in their own voices, were allowed to control personal and in-depth responses as well as the flow of topics. Divided into five sections, the interviews were kept open-ended so that each researcher was able to follow conversational leads. In this way the researchers were free to establish rapport with the participants so that the interviews resembled a "conversation between friends" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p.135) rather than an asymmetrical relationship controlled by the researcher. By choosing conversations, the teacher-respondents were enabled to control the processes through which their words were given meaning (Mishler, 1986, p.117). Sometimes the participants told narratives in response to direct, specific questions if they were not interrupted by the researcher trying to keep them to the "point" (Mishler, 1986). The interview protocols are included in Appendix B. Three team members are experienced in using this technique. Each collaborative interview was audio-taped and later transcribed. The conversational interview process was designed to encourage Aboriginal participants to tell stories of their teaching lives. Narratives allowed participants to reach backwards from the vantage point of the present in order to appraise events in the past and attribute meaning to them.

Feminist Perspective

In analyzing and rendering the data, we also cast our study in a feminist perspective to allow

voices of the Aboriginal teachers ring true. As researchers, we contextualized the data into our own subjective selves reflecting the participants= and our own equal vulnerability. For a feminist researcher is partially subject, partially researcher, partially self, partially other and never exclusively and wholly one or the other. We posed questions that would lead to social changes in oppressed conditions and that would A unsilence@ or neutralize the problems that Aboriginal teachers encounter in the Saskatchewan provincial schools system.

As a group we recognize the epistemological parameters in our research undertaking as we acknowledge the experiences of Aboriginal teachers being resources for new knowledge. In this framework, we took considerable care to Aunsettle@ assumptions and challenge familiar beliefs about teachers and school life. As stated earlier, this group is committed to social justice and undertook this enquiry to contribute to the empowerment and improvement in the quality of life among all Saskatchewan learners to emancipate them from unresolved solitudes.

Analysis of Data

Analysis is the making sense out of data. Analysis within a naturalistic perspective is inductive and constructive (Tesch, 1990). The 38 audio-taped collaborative conversational interviews were transcribed. These transcriptions were checked and approved by the teacher-participants, and intensively studied by the researcher involved in the original interviewing. The transcribed interviews were thematically organized by a research assistant, and checked again by the research team. The final analysis was an intense collaborative effort where the five team members conducted a further thematic analysis of each question and then added interpretative comments to each category of data. The research meetings and discussions were also taped and transcribed and

to use as part of the data for the study. In rendering and refining the commentary, the intercultural team members sat side-by-side at computers to refine initial impressions and generate a more thoughtful interpretation that was true to the data and respectful to the history and culture of the participants. These reflections are reported as the collective narrative of our intercultural team. The researchers' commentary is presented in a collective voice (Legare, 1996) in order to understand the teachers' experiences in a paradigmatic Aimaginative@ and synthesized way. We believe that the conversations between this group of mainstream and Aboriginal women, all of whom are teachers, add a rich context that illuminates the voices and the intentions of the participants.

Ethical Considerations

As a team, we are aware that Aboriginal people's voices historically have been appropriated by mainstream researchers. As a research team we addressed issues of appropriation by committing ourselves to use the wording of the teacher-participants in a respectful way in our data analysis and advice for recommendations. In order to maintain anonymity for those participants who desire it, this study followed the SSHRC guidelines, and adhered to the recommendations required by the University of Saskatchewan Committee on Behavioral Ethics.

The methodology has been conceptualized to be inclusive of all participants. Four team members had worked together in a prior collaborative project, during which Aboriginal teachers were encouraged to present their findings at school system inservice workshops. As a team, we will support those teacher participants who would like to be involved in oral and written representations of our work together.

The Research Team

A particular strength of this project is the intercultural composition of the research team. Collectively we have experience with cross-cultural education in the United States, Greenland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Great Britain, British Columbia, and the Yukon, all regions of the Northwest Territories, Alberta and Manitoba as well as Saskatchewan. Amongst the research team, teaching experiences stem from different parts of the world inclusive of Saskatchewan provincial schools, the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program, the Indian and Northern Education Program and the Indian Teacher Education Program at the University of Saskatchewan. This project drew heavily on our collective experience of Aboriginal education at the provincial, national and international levels.

Angela Ward is an Associate Professor in the Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan. She lived and taught for twenty years in an Aboriginal community and has published in the area of cross-cultural language literacy in educational settings.

Linda Wason-Ellam is a Professor in Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan teaching courses in Literacy, Children=s Literature, and Ethnography. She has had extensive experience in cross-cultural inner-city classrooms in Canada, Britain, and the United States. As an author, she has published many articles that highlight the social-cultural worlds of children on their differing pathways to literacy.

Shauneen Pete-Willett has served as Indian and Métis consultant with the Saskatoon Public Board of Education. She is well-known as a story-teller and cultural resource person. Currently Ms. Pete-Willett is completing a M. Ed. in Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan.

and has recently been accepted to University of Arizona, Tucson, in Ph.D. studies.

Karla Jessen Williamson is a lecturer at the Indian and Northern Education Program, University of Saskatchewan. She is a Greenland Inuk (kalaaleq). Her knowledge of Indigenous languages has been useful in bringing out aspects of different world views for this study. Karla is in Ph.D. studies at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland.

Louise Legare is a woman of Métis ancestry who has conducted participatory research using collaborative conversational interviews with Aboriginal women in her M.Ed. research. She has been an adult curriculum developer and presently teaches in the Indian Teacher Education Program, University of Saskatchewan.

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Findings

The words of the Aboriginal teachers who participated in this project reverberate throughout the responses. The research questions were layered upon Saskatchewan Education=s initial inquiry: **What are the experiences and attitudes of Aboriginal teachers in the provincial system?**

In presenting the findings, we have highlighted Aboriginal teachers= responses to each question; these responses then became interwoven with the research team=s narrative commentary. In so doing, we endeavoured to make visible the voices and aspirations of all participants in the study. The overarching question inspired five related questions of which the

first one was:

Section 1: What are Aboriginal teachers= experiences in working with non-Aboriginal colleagues?

Aboriginal teachers= descriptions of limitations they experience in working with non-Aboriginal teachers

When responding to the first question, a number of themes emerged. Being respectful to their own words, the participating teachers= responses follow:

Feelings of isolation and experiences of racism

I have a problem with non-Natives. I find it difficult to relate to non-Natives. I have a hard time to relate to non-Native people. I just have fear talking with them.

I felt isolated. I felt very much Indian, not part of the white staff. They would read the paper on Native issues, and criticize the Indians. This was the first time that I realized that I had a racist staff that was't aware they were racist. I spent more time by myself.

What non-Native teachers can say to the Native teacher is AWe will do an Indian Unit@, which is probably dance or things like that, no social issues, transformation or any social justice.

I think for a lot of non-Aboriginal teachers, they might take as an offence by asking or by not asking. They still have the tendency to lump everybody together.

Non-Aboriginal teachers= resistance to working with Aboriginal teachers and students

Some teachers are in inner city schools only because they are placed there.

A lot of people view this community school as one that is going to turn Indian.

Some teachers do not come to Aboriginal teachers to share unit information.

One lady from the North was quite militant. Guess what happened? The white teachers started falling back and defending themselves. You have to be careful not to do that - You have to couch what you say, in an understanding way that doesn=t offend.

Communication with non-Aboriginal staff

I have noticed that non-Native teachers speak fast, to the point.

I probably feel more comfortable socializing with the Aboriginal staff members than I do with non Aboriginal members, although I do go out and do things with the staff.

I talk in the classroom the way the students talk on the street and on the playground.

There are things you will tell other Aboriginal people without being afraid that they will use them against you whereas there are things that you will never tell non Aboriginal colleagues.

You don=t make waves.

I feel when I am with non-Aboriginal teachers, they are watching what they say. It=s like AWe=d better not say that because ____ is First Nations@. Maybe I would get mad.

Comments, such as AI cannot imagine going to the laundromat@, AWhy would they name a kid Star?@

The thing that I struggled with is having people listen to me when I talk in a group.

Role expectations and identity issues

The teachers would come to me whenever they needed a culture unit, AWe need some Indian stuff@. Never in the area of math.

We had to act as resource people to other staff - to know the ways to be supportive and

to give them the information about us and about our culture as they ask for it

All of a sudden, I realized that all the Aboriginal students were my responsibility.

AThe Native Culture Committee@ was Native people, AThe Directions and Undertakings Committee@ was non-Native.

They think somehow or in some way I would be better equipped or more knowledgeable to deal with these children because they are Native and because I am Native that I know some secret or something.

There are always people who ask me how to deal with certain situations with regards to an Aboriginal student or a Métis student. I give them my perspective as best as possible.

You are immediately looked as an expert in everything, naming, and ceremony, whatever. It is almost like you are the one to inform the rest of the population there of what=s going on.

When people found out that I know something besides Aboriginal culture, they seek me out for those kinds of things. But usually it is about Indian stuff.

They were very accepting, but a lot of them had this preconceived idea, AGood to have you, I know a good one or two somewhere, you are the exception, one of the better ones@. I found a lot of them were willing to learn. They were curious.

Well everybody is trying to be considerate to Native people. They try to be considerate to those Native children in our classrooms. However, let=s not forget about the other ones.

I am not the most Aboriginal looking person . So I really have no problem associating with anybody at the school level, at the board level, or in general public.

When the speaker was speaking about Indians being shy and quiet; someone said A I

have really noticed that about you@, and I=m not at all quiet.

Social activities

I didn=t fit in with the staff - the different recreations. We do different things.

I would not socialize with staff after hours because alcohol was involved. When I practice my own cultural religion, we don=t drink.

Aboriginal teachers= relationships with colleagues and students

But I think Native teachers want to be with Natives in the inner city schools. I asked a friend why she likes to teach there (an inner city school). She said, ABecause it is my culture@.

One of the things that I have to try to explain to non-Aboriginal teachers is that how important relationships are. It=s at the core of our social understandings and our social relationships.

There is collaboration there, and there is me. A lot of time, it=s not that they don=t want to involve me. They just don=t want to make me feel that I have to do everything they are doing.

Some of them were very nice people, and were a pleasure to work with. Some of them were very negative, narrow-minded and difficult to work with. You can=t generalize, they are all individual. And people change.

Non-Native teachers teach in some schools for a year, then transfer, whereas Aboriginal teachers stay because they feel more closely connected to the children.

Confusion about hiring practices

One teacher said that you are not qualified to be here. You are here because you are Native. This notion that SUNTEP is granting an inferior education, substandard curriculum, that I wasn=t really cut out to be a teacher, but I was there because I was just a Native.

Research team=s narrative commentary on Aboriginal teachers= description of limitations they experience in working with non-Aboriginal teachers

Aboriginal teachers who have a strong identity and who have not been challenged or marginalized prior to being hired seem to feel that their relationships with non-Aboriginal teachers are respectful. Teachers who have experienced marginalization in the past, who may feel oppression or struggle with their own identity, feel isolated and ostracized. They talk about feeling uncomfortable with their colleagues and have difficulty working with non-Aboriginal teachers.

There is also a challenge around structural issues such as hiring processes through Aaffirmative action@ practices. Some Aboriginal teachers may feel that they have been hired without careful professional consideration. Others feel that non-Aboriginal teachers may be second-guessing their qualifications. Non-Aboriginal teachers tend to define the hiring of Aboriginal teachers in the school systems as an affirmative action mandate rather than education equity in a broader sense.

Aboriginal teachers also feel they have been positioned as the cultural resource person on school staffs and have been isolated in that way. In addition, they relate that they are overwhelmed by social issues that are not addressed by the working environment. The participants express concerns about the issues of self-identity, equity, racism, stereotyping, and were also unsettled by the non-Aboriginal teachers= and parents= perceptions of them and their role as teachers.

Since schools are microcosms of the larger society, the frictions that are prevailing in society are ultimately likely to be appearing in the school setting. The limitations these teachers are experiencing parallel the limitations they experience in society. This can be exemplified when

teachers who do not look typically Native have commented on the fact that they do not have difficulties working with their non-Aboriginal colleagues. In reality, they may not experience difficulties in the larger society either.

Aboriginal teachers want to be valued as professional teachers. They do not want ANative@ as their overarching label in the school setting. They want to be viewed as co-learners who are collaboratively seeking professional self-development within their teaching practices. As they assume many roles in school, being viewed as professional teachers is one of their most important aspirations.

In summary, the Aboriginal teachers we interviewed perceived limitations in their ability to contribute to the teaching profession at both the personal and system levels. They spoke of feelings of social isolation, experiences of racism, and of their own and other teachers= confusion over role expectations and identity issues for Aboriginal teachers. There were misunderstandings generated by hiring practices and differences between Aboriginal and mainstream teachers in social interactions and views of professional relationships.

Aboriginal teachers= views of what promotes positive experiences with non-Aboriginal colleagues

Most Aboriginal teachers had experienced positive relationships with their non-Aboriginal colleagues, and expressed the desire to build on these positive experiences in collaborative ways that enhance cross-cultural environments. Some Aboriginal teachers had worked with non-Aboriginal

teachers who had demonstrated support and interest in Aboriginal education issues. The following are expressed possibilities for positive cross-cultural collaborations.

Successful teaching collaborations

They come to me and say AWhat do you think about this or is it okay I go through this?@ There is a grade 2 teacher here who feels very comfortable teaching Native stuff.

I actually run the program with a non-Aboriginal teacher. She has got the same kind of interest.

We also have a lot of very keen non-Aboriginal teachers in our system. They phone me and come in to the workshops. It=s been wonderful to see them being so pro-active.

Support from non-Aboriginal colleagues

The interactions in our staff room are really good. We have awesome staff here.

I felt very encouraged by those non-Native teacher associates. They get a bird=s eye view of things.

Everybody on staff sees each other as equal. There isn=t any need to bunch up according to race or anything else.

Those who have worked with me for the same length of time are comfortable with me because they had seen me as someone who came in and didn=t really say too much, once I got comfortable with who I am and with what I can do, I became more vocal and much more of a doer, not a watcher.

They are becoming more familiar with and more comfortable with our presence. Whether they realize it or not, and in spite of themselves, their attitude and their ideas about the order of things are gradually being transformed. That=s a positive thing.

My experience with non-Aboriginal teachers has been overwhelmingly positive- they have been screened and selected in my particular school.

Strengthening interpersonal relationships

We should socialize with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers, depending on the person, at social functions.

Sharing cultural activities

Culture means those things that are specific to a group of people in terms of language, spirituality. Negotiation is something that you are finding a middle ground, do you agree on something.

We had a lot of cultural activities, the feast, and the dance; as a result the staff became friends.

Socializing as a staff; using sweat lodge, hockey.

Socializing out of school- hunting, sweat lodges.

Research team=s narrative commentary -suggestions for improving relationships with non Aboriginal colleagues

Staffroom conversations can be isolating. Often, teacher conversations can reflect assimilationist discourse. When such communication is not recognized, groups of people may be silenced and feel put down and unwelcome. To build solid coalitions, learning a variety of communicative interactions should be part of professional training in cross-cultural education.

Many Aboriginal teachers say that they are not invited into the dialogue because they do not share similar histories and experiences with non-Aboriginal teachers. Team building activities can bridge these cultural spaces. Two participants suggested that schools can work together within the

community. They suggested there should be a retreat at the beginning of the year where teachers go out for the weekend, to camp and share mutual experiences.

Another suggestion is team teaching. In such a collaborative working environment, stereotypes unravel and networks develop as teammates work towards shared goals. Cross-cultural channels of communication and sensitivity emerge as teachers begin to see each other beyond cultural boundaries with many interests and contributions to share. These qualities are steps to becoming a professional teacher.

Other suggested activities include playing hockey or attending a sweat lodge. By setting these types of activities outside of the classroom setting, an opportunity is created for mutual relationships and caring. Administrators can be part of the solution by envisioning the building of a school culture that removes barriers between staff and shows the appreciation of the diversity among staff.

When non-Aboriginal educators work with Aboriginal peoples, there are different interaction patterns to consider. As well, non-Aboriginal educators have had a varying range of experiences when working with Aboriginal peoples. As a result of this circumstance, non-Aboriginal educators will have different comfort levels with Aboriginal peoples. Frequently, Aboriginal educators are asked a range of questions about their people from the simplest requests for information to questions which are intense, spiritual, and sacred. For the Aboriginal teacher this can be a burden, due to the reality that some Aboriginal teachers have from virtually no cultural knowledge where others may have been raised in traditional ways. Aboriginal teachers will attempt to answer most questions to the best of their ability.

Many non-Aboriginal teachers may ask questions about how to teach Aboriginal content.

Instead of stereotyping Aboriginal peoples as monolithic, we need to create opportunities to communicate information about the difference among Aboriginal peoples. This will contribute tremendously to providing accurate accounts of Aboriginal history and experience to mainstream educators. Aboriginal identity is developed through the expression of individual culture which too often is essentialized as universal in mainstream discourse.

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Section 2: What are Aboriginal teachers= experiences in working with administrators?

For most part, the administrators establish the working climate for Aboriginal teachers. This second section describe the limitations and supports within the work environment as perceived by the Aboriginal teachers. Their suggestions for improvement are offered and as well as a commentary of the research team. In reflecting upon the question **What limits Aboriginal teachers as professionals in their relationships with administrators?**, the participants describe their perspectives.

Pressure to be Anon-political@

Recently I was approached by the supervisor and told not to be political, to be very careful about getting too political.

The superintendent called me to his office in downtown, very formal, he said to me it was not my role to influence who was to be hired there.

We try to look at things internally, from the system=s perspective, you are supposed to keep things inside the system as much as possible.

They wanted to have somebody who would make their organization look good, but they didn=t want to have somebody who would want to have substantial change. The principal was a very racist administrator.

Administrators= resistance to change

The administrators are kind of locked in the system. Some of the principals are

protecting their territory strenuously. Vice principals have less authority. They are bound to be loyal, faithful to the Apowers@.

My principal was quite supportive of me initially until I found out that he and this trustee were like buddies. Then that was not good for me. He treated me differently in that situation.

Lack of sensitivity to personal and cultural issues

I was talking to a principal about racism. He said, AWell, there is no racism in our school@.

Some administrators are not considerate of time constraints on teachers.

Administrators= insistence on hierarchical structures

I didn=t have a hiring interview because I was asked two years before that if I was interested in teaching. That person happened to become a superintendent.

I never really felt close to the administrators at the time. I felt close to the vice principal, but not the principal. The authoritarian type of person I always had feared myself.

They are so uptight it doesn=t matter what you do, you would offend [administrator] anyway because the principal is just that type of person.

He was fine, very supportive, very paternal. He thought I was a child. I needed to be told what to do, where to do it, how to do it, how to dress, everything. He did this to everybody, not particularly just me. He treated me very much like everybody else.

I will always be respectful, courteous and polite to the principals who make decisions at school.

Lack of support and poor communication

Failure of administration to support staff in front of or to parents.

Every little thing I did seemed to be wrong.

Expectations of teachers need to be clearly communicated.

There is a power dynamic in the office where a certain bunch of women know how to charm the administration on their side and they run the school.

I go to the office only on business.

She is more friendly with other staff members than with, say, me. Maybe I am quieter, more reserved.

I had difficulty dealing with an emphasis on staff consensus when Aboriginal teachers are in the minority.

There was the other administrator whom I didn=t have much respect for because to me, I believe he is a racist.

School system issues

The school is a supportive environment, but I experience frustration with the downtown office, and school services. The staff and the environment are supportive; and the principal is approachable with problems.

It=s hard to deal with the expectations of central office administrators that Aboriginal teachers will be role models for student.

Research team=s narrative commentary on Aboriginal teachers= descriptions of limitations by administrators

Aboriginal teachers felt suppressed by administrators who used authoritarian leadership in

staff interactions and when addressing educational issues. The teachers expressed the expectation that they were not to be political or to make waves. Some felt that they were censored for voicing their opinions, values, beliefs, or knowledge.

Lack of effective communication skills was also seen as an issue between Aboriginal teachers and their administrators. This may stem from asymmetrical power relationships which can exist in administrative structures. In a similar way, mainstream consensus-making processes as a resolution strategy can be a hierarchical administrative structure. Consensus-making has the potential to silence a diversity of voices. Instead, an Aboriginal consensus making format can promote a more egalitarian structure, since the purpose is not necessarily to form consensus but to respect everyone=s voice in making decisions. Although it may be considered too time consuming for some, it places an importance on honoring diversity for others.

Some participants expressed that the process of supervision was an awkward cultural dilemma. For some Aboriginal teachers, the process of being mentored and learning from a more experienced professional involves a dialogue which is initiated from the learner. In the mainstream supervision cycle, it is the administrator who determines what is to be observed and when the observation will occur. This leaves the Aboriginal teacher in the position that observation is a performance which leaves the teachers feeling as if they are putting on an act. What may be missing in the supervision cycle for the Aboriginal teacher is the dialogue which involves requesting assistance with teaching practices when help is needed in a particular area..

Aboriginal teachers= descriptions of what promotes them as teachers in their relationships with administrators

Many Aboriginal teachers have also had positive experiences with administrators and were

explicit in their appreciation of the support. They attributed these positive experiences to their administrators= genuine interest in Aboriginal issues, daily classroom contact, effective communication skills, and support of Aboriginal teachers in their career paths.

Communication skills

Communication between administrators and staff is very important.

I have received good support from the office-the principal is always willing to listen and talk.

This year is better than the first year. He is constantly learning, growing in the position.

Building a supportive school culture

He makes the staff stick together, supporting one another, especially for those new teachers coming on board.

There was a senior administrator who is a wonderful person who works with Aboriginal people.

The VP would be the must understanding person; she seemed to know exactly what was needed, what I needed, what to say, what to do, everything.

She had a way of teaching you something without making it an authority thing.

The support I got was tremendous, especially from the principal. He certainly had good, strong values about communication, and treating one another as human beings with a lot of respect, helping one another grow, and develop in good way.

There is a lot of dialogue, discussion between us in terms of what=s happening within the school, what=s happening within the staff the students, discussing on what kind of things should be done to strengthen the programs.

I still feel that I am treated as a professional.

Commitment to change

Some of the key administrators in the system are very genuine in terms of their commitment to bringing about meaningful change.

Interest in Aboriginal cultures

Another lady I worked with, a past VP, a very very good administrator. I became very close to the administrators at my last school. They were very receptive, understanding, wanting to know, wanting to learn.

The principal did an exceptional job in supporting me. He had a keen interest in the area of studying Aboriginal cultures.

Close connections with the classroom

He recognized some of the special efforts I had made perhaps during the assembly time, he came in and participated in the classroom, and circle time once in awhile. I just felt that I was supported.

He came into the classroom. He made sure that other teachers were close at hand, and came to talk to me. Even now when I run into him, he will tease me, AYou haven=t quit yet, How are you doing?@

Supporting Aboriginal teachers at the system level

The principal opened the door for teachers to meet superintendents, Minister of Education, Director of Education- they attended feasts at the school.

The Director of Education told me ATeach from who you are@ - this is exactly what I wanted to hear.

Supporting Aboriginal teachers= career development

The principal was supportive, encouraging -and suggested that the teacher consider doing a masters degree, entering the Oregon Program.

My principal was supportive- he encouraged me to go back to school, and do a master=s.

I am applying for a master=s program, and they both fully supported me in my endeavour, giving me letters of reference and speaking to people who needed to know about my ability.

Being Aboriginal I was encouraged by my first administrator to become part of the Indian and Métis Equity Committee because it would be a good experience for me.

They always encouraged me to take part in committees as much as possible because that=s where you learn how the system works and it=s all connected.

One principal assisted a teacher in transferring from a high school to an elementary school to prevent the teacher from leaving the profession.

Strong relationships with community

The principal was warm and inviting to parents, not condescending.

The same way that I would perceive the elders in our community. That=s how I perceive the principal in school.

Standing up for Aboriginal teachers in racist incidents

A principal=s job is to ensure that racist comments are not made.

Research team=s narrative commentary- positive experiences with administration

Administrators assume a pivotal role in communicating and facilitating their acceptance of diversity. When the system works well, the principal is seen as a mentor, a concept very congruent to Aboriginal people=s expectation that you learn from somebody who has more experience. This is an example of a mentoring relationship in which power is shared. The principal advocates that teachers join committees and further their professional growth.

Skillful administrators also communicate well with parents and the community. They build positive relationships within the school setting as a whole and recognize their own limitations when addressing Aboriginal issues. This leadership style involves a reciprocity with parents and

community people where needs of the Aboriginal students can be met in a culturally affirming way. The building of positive relationships also involves celebrating success.

Racist incidents and comments continue to occur in the school setting and the participants expressed their concern about how these incidents and comments are often ignored, are dismissed, and are not dealt with. Racist dialogue is hurtful and denigrates all people. Administrators can assume a leadership role in addressing racism in schools by raising awareness and exposing racist ideologies. As well, administrators can develop strategies to respond to racist behavior. These priorities are essential in building an anti-racist climate in the school.

The Aboriginal teachers also commented on qualities of the administrator who leads the school that is striving to create an anti-racist tone. The participants suggested that administrators need to know themselves and they need to be open in learning about others. Expression of positive and negative experiences allowed the Aboriginal teacher to better come to know their administrator as a person. As well, administrators play a key role in greeting and welcoming new teachers to the staff.

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Section 3: What are the experiences and attitudes of Aboriginal teachers towards teaching. How do Aboriginal teachers culturally negotiate curriculum?

As a team we decided to consider this question slightly differently. We extended the question to AHow do Aboriginal teachers culturally negotiate curriculum?@ Since describing experiences and attitudes towards teaching is such a broad question, one of the ways to elicit

answers was to rephrase the questions to request teachers= thoughts about how they negotiate curriculum as an Aboriginal person. Their responses attest to the hard work and commitment required when Aboriginal teachers adapt existing curriculum and develop learning materials and resources to meets the needs of all learners. The Aboriginal teachers also identified dilemmas they face when deciding what cultural knowledge is appropriate to contribute to the classroom.

How Aboriginal teachers adapt curriculum

You have heard that a lot of the provincial curriculum is culturally inappropriate. It is not geared for Aboriginal students. We like to implement things that are culturally appropriate.

I followed curriculum guidelines, didn=t feel comfortable at first bringing in Aboriginal content - trying to survive as a teacher (administrators and parents might not be receptive to Aboriginal content).

We take the material and use what we can, and search for other information that could be more applicable to the teaching environment and teaching styles we have.

I do teach grade 6 curriculum, but my main unit theme is self concept and self identity at grade 6. I am getting these kids to feel good about themselves and to learn how to respect other cultures.

I adapt the material, making it fit to the programs offered in [the school].

Role as resource persons

I act as resource person for non-Aboriginal teachers.

You don=t want them to think that just because you are an Aboriginal teacher, that=s all they are going to learn from you. They are still going to learn chapters and math. They are still

going to learn science. But I do put some Aboriginal content in there. We talk about different plants. We do stories about astrology, how it came down from our ancestors.

When I came there [the school], I got all Native study classes. They gave me that curriculum to teach.

I was responsible for putting Native-oriented materials in the school libraries.

I provide the school librarian with catalogues and other resources acquired at workshops about Indian and Métis teaching strategies.

Development of materials and resources

Materials for teaching Aboriginal education are becoming greater all the time with the increase of population in the province.

I engage in the use of off-site resources such as museums.

Literature

I use Aboriginal materials, stories, books.

I use books to show differences, stereotypes.

I had a whole pack of things. I would bring big books that I had made myself. So I would take a lot of books and a lot of literature that we made ourselves.

Art and drama activities

We took pictures, we did pictures or sculptures, always something hands-on.

We did a lot of speeches, poems, stories, we put them all up. We shared all of it.

I did a lot of displaying Native artwork in school.

We did some wonderful art projects there. I have some hung in the office that students did for me.

Dilemmas in teaching cultural information

While we are being told, literally being blackmailed, into teaching culture, adapting the curriculum to our culture, there are people who are making the decisions having no idea what they are talking about or what we have to go through.

At first [20 years ago] there was no curriculum guide for Cree language-we had to find materials from other sources.

Curriculum - Aboriginal teachers= inclusion of Aboriginal culture and values

Cultural information

It is important that the better we understand our own history, our own past, the better we can try to understand the situations that we face as Aboriginal people, the better we can deal with these situations.

I try to incorporate into the programming traditional and spiritual things to validate students= own culture and themselves as people.

Curriculum development and instruction

We did ten themes, trying to make it as cultural as possible. The units were always based on the children=s interest.

We have Aboriginal values written up on the wall.

I utilized talking circle last year when I taught grade six. I found it to be a very useful strategy for building the sense of community in the classroom for enhancing the involvement level of the students. Four days out of five we had talking circle built into the language arts component.

But I had the cultural arts and that was effortless in terms of teaching. The cultural art

was fun because it was the drum, the dancing, singing.

I feel comfortable teaching Cree songs from the tapes.

Through drama we have been able to tell our stories, share our stories, make people laugh, incorporate the humour that is inherent within the Native culture.

I sing, play the guitar, tell stories.

I pour my energy into showing them the beauty of their own language and culture.

Incorporating the Cree language- Cree as a second language.

We had guest speakers- elders, Native veterans, dancers, drummers, the director of the Mendel art gallery

Working with Elders

We are blessed in a way that we are allowed to have two Elders in our school to guide us when it comes to things of culture and spirituality . We have sweet grass every day. We try to make spirituality a daily part of life rather than religion.

We have been working towards exposing students to a lot of ceremonies, and do circles with them.

What I do is I tell them the first day of the class is that they should develop their own journey, taking from what the elders say.

Elders in the classroom to talk about respect, to go through the values, tell stories.

Planning cultural things with elders for students.

Dilemmas of cultural inclusion

I am always going to powwow, I know all about sweet grass, sun dances. But I don=t think I am old enough to be teaching people that.

I am constrained by dilemmas about whether or not to do things in the classroom, such as Native spirituality, which some feel should be left to Elders.

I have always been taught that my elders know more than I do - that=s where the idea of not pursuing my Nativeness in school comes in.

I felt I was not able to bring my cultural identity into the classroom at first; needed time to gain acceptance.

Classroom relationships and values

Respect

We always deal with respect from day one in my room. I told the children, AThis is what indigenous people do. This is how we appreciate each other. This is the tradition from a long time ago.@

I was told AYou don=t verbalize a lot of discipline, you=re not very vocal@.

From day one I said, AI won=t have anybody interrupt me. I won=t have anybody interrupt any other teachers. If one of us has something to say, we all sit and listen to see what that somebody has to say.@. AThis is how indigenous people do. This is how they treat each other.@

Relationships with students

I look more into the students that I get each year and teach them the way I think that will best help them.

Whatever subject I am teaching, I always try to relate it, I always try to bring it down to the little guys= level . You have to pull back and bring in their own experiences on reserve.

I encourage teachers to open up because you can=t keep the distance between you and the child. The child will not open up with you unless you open up with them. So you have [to] share your stories about your family. You have to share your life stories.

I told them about my elder who said sometimes she felt like crying, sometime she felt like laughing, so why hold it back, it=s part of your human emotion, you need to express yourself A Being human, that=s one of the things I am telling people when I am doing the workshops, to educators, Alet your kids know who you are@

I use a lot of my personal stories when I am teaching my class now. [the interviewee taught] grade 9 English and a cultural arts program. It was fancy dance, and Native art.

Commitment to Aboriginal education and culture

When someone asks me why we like to teach in inner city schools, I say because it=s my culture.

Views of Aboriginal teachers= role

I thought what I wanted to do to give students was what I never had. I wanted to get to them before they wait until their university years to let them know that Alt=s all right, like listen to your elders, listen to those old people. They are not to be shunned or embarrassed by what they are saying. That=s where your intellect lies@.

A lot of these students are from single parent families. They don=t have male role models in their family life, in their home life. So they really come to school and have a lot of admiration for me. I try to instill into them the Aboriginal values and beliefs that we utilize as bases of belief system in our school as much as possible.

Spirituality

We do things that help us grow, spiritually first of all, we know one another, we pray, using some of the ceremonies, Elders take us through. We also have our spirituality with our families, we all practice Catholicism. Still we can interact, pray in another way, traditional ceremonies, learn to communicate and get along.

Teaching the values of school. I do a lot of that. We do the talking circle, which is very important. So everybody has a chance to talk about their desires.

But I found one neat thing teaching Indian kids is that whatever I talk to them about the traditional things, they seem to really listen and they are genuinely interested.

Teaching non-Aboriginal learners about Aboriginal people.

Sharing information

We try to teach our students that people say Aboriginal people get things. But if you understand and teach about the treaty process, the agreements, if we understand those as Aboriginal people, then it is a lot easier to deflect negative comments coming from people who are ignorant to these processes that were taking place a hundred years ago.

There are so many First Nations and Métis kids, we need to target what they have learned back at home, What they have learned on the reserve. What they have learned as people and bring it to school. But I know even when we do it, they will still call it the AIndian Unit@.

There should be an appropriate program or programs in place to help non- Aboriginal teachers come to a better understanding of Aboriginal people so that they can help the students rather than refuse to deal with them

Dealing with racism

She [student] said, A[teacher], why did you give me an Indian colour?@ I said, AStop, you listen to what I am going to tell you.@ I told her that I am an Indian.@ So stop the rude comments now@.

AMs. ---, is there anything else we can learn about? Why do we always do books on racism?@ I thought to myself AWhat am I doing? Maybe I am pushing it to them@.

Responding to the community

I do a lot of counseling as an intermediary between parents and schools.

The school was not very positive. I started keeping my culture in my pocket. I would do it on my own time. I wouldn=t use First Nations stories because parents would get upset about that.

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers= lack of knowledge

From my own experience going through an Aboriginal training program, we mixed together pretty much all the time. We were there for one another. We supported one another. I don=t think there was that clear alienation between genders that seems to exist in western culture.

Now the problem that is more recent is that we have teachers who have discovered that you can be hired if you are Aboriginal. So they will say that they are Métis. Sometimes, how can you prove they are and how can you prove they aren=t? They sure don=t know anything about the culture. But some say that they discovered they were Métis before they went to SUNTEP. They didn=t know they were Métis until a few years ago.

Research team=s narrative commentary:

Negotiating curriculum - materials and resources

As newly hired teachers, the Aboriginal participants found that they were told *Ato just go ahead@*. They were literally on their own, trying to negotiate curriculum without getting any feedback or direction from anyone. There were few programs or workshops which delineated their role as an Aboriginal teacher in relation to curriculum development and adaptation. This lack of support and guidelines created confusion and role ambiguity.

This confusion and role ambiguity was further intensified by individual Aboriginal teachers= experience and knowledge within the cultural context. Some participants were newly coming to

recognize their Aboriginality while others were versed in Aboriginal traditions and experiences. Due to the colonial history of Aboriginal peoples, cultural discontinuity has created a situation where some Aboriginal teachers need to learn extensively about their culture while others can access that knowledge and experience readily. With a sense of responsibility as an Aboriginal teacher, some participants expressed their anxiety to culturally negotiate appropriate curriculum when they themselves were learning the ways of their ancestral traditions. In the words of one participant, *AI wasn=t really doing a very good job of it because I still need to know how to do it.@*

For other Aboriginal teachers, being Aboriginal is not the focus in their teaching. These participants stated that since they do not actively participate in the culture, they do not seek to integrate culture in their teaching practices. Even though some Aboriginal teachers are making significant kinds of contributions, the reality is that there are varying degrees of cultural negotiation depending on self-identity.

Once Aboriginal teachers choose to negotiate the curriculum across cultures, methods, programs, and philosophies, they discover that there is little support. However, to include culture in the curriculum Aboriginal teachers may need to search for community people and network with others who are involved in implementing Aboriginal curriculum. Some Aboriginal teachers felt indebted to the resource librarians who provided them with help. Participants also expressed the need to have support and recognition from administration for the amount of work required to create and implement culturally relevant curriculum.

Some supports already in place have been identified as affirming and valuable. For example, there are network workshops available to some Aboriginal teachers where they can produce a collection of Aboriginal generated teaching materials. One process which has been identified as

successful involves recognition of the Aboriginal teacher as the resource person, creator of materials, and mentor to others. This process instills self-confidence and creates a sense of pride and accomplishment for the Aboriginal teacher. As well, the publication of materials contributes exemplary resources for the teaching profession as a whole.

Commentary on teaching non-Aboriginal learners about Aboriginal people

Many Aboriginal teacher participants identified a particular concern regarding constant information and protocol requests from Aboriginal people from non-Aboriginal peoples. The participants identified some ways to deal with these demands. Aboriginal teachers find themselves working in isolation when generating curriculum materials for their own classroom use. Subsequently, they find few avenues to share this material with other professionals. *AI do a lot of this work on my own, and I use it on my own. I never gave it to other people of course because I am too busy, creating units or creating lessons.@* The participants stated that they would like to be recognized as cultural resource persons, they would like the chance to have time to prepare the materials for publication, and they would like to have a clearinghouse for Aboriginal resource materials. *AI have all this teaching stuff that I can teach for ten years. But it is in my drawer.@* With a distribution system in place, the participants felt that there would be two significant benefits. The constant demand would lessen and subsequently many professional educators, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, would have access to culturally relevant curriculum resources.

In addition to adapting curriculum, Aboriginal teachers are requested to share information about cultural values, beliefs and protocol. Keeping in mind the aforementioned comments regarding the range of cultural experiences which Aboriginal teachers have had, the participants

found the requests for information were to be time consuming and energy draining. For many Aboriginal teachers the requirement to have a Adouble understanding@ (Monture-Angus, p.83) means having to understand and function in both mainstream and Aboriginal cultural worlds. The necessity in having to negotiate in two cultural communities parallels the university experience of Aboriginal teacher training. The participants expressed the concern that some non-Aboriginal professionals may not have information about teacher preparation for Aboriginal peoples. The TEPS (teacher education programs) are premised on the concept of Adouble learning@ and so provide the teacher in training with an opportunity to learn both mainstream and Aboriginal ways of knowing. All Aboriginal teachers who are certified and granted Bachelor of Education Degrees in Saskatchewan must complete the same requirements as mainstream education students. The significant difference for TEP students is the cultural aspect of their training program. It is from Aboriginal teacher=s education and experiences that requests for information on values, beliefs, and protocols can be answered. The answer to questions from non-Aboriginal peoples is the expression of Adouble understanding@.

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Section 4: What are Aboriginal teachers= opinions about what promotes or limits them as teachers? What are their solutions to such constraints?

Section Four asked Aboriginal teachers to summarize many of their earlier reflections. Some of the responses echo previous descriptions of limitations and supports. Generally, responses encompassed pragmatic issues such as hiring and retention practices, as well as subtler aspects of professional life such as school climate and demystifying assumptions about Aboriginal peoples.

Aboriginal teachers= descriptions of what limits them as teachers

Hiring practices and choice of placements

The biggest limitation is breaking into the workforce, breaking into the system, actually getting a job.

I didn=t know there was such a thing as education equity or that they were hiring Natives because they needed more Native teachers. I feel as if I wasn=t hired for my skills. I didn=t get hired for me on my qualifications. I got hired because I am a Native person.

There is a tendency to hire those who are standard English speakers; those speaking with a distinct Cree dialect are probably at a disadvantage.

I didn=t want to teach in a school with a low Native population- I felt my skill or talent and knowledge were wasted.

Sometimes I have the feeling that you are not good enough a teacher because you went to ITEP or SUNTEP.

The daughter would also come in and tell other students in her class and told other students that the teacher was not a real teacher because she was from SUNTEP.

Difficulties in working with inner-city communities

I find it difficult working with students who do not have supplies, who have to deal with problems at home, such as poverty.

The insufficient resources for Aboriginal curriculum are a limitation for me.

Sustaining school cultures which support diversity

Progress was being made at my school in terms of cultural development, but personnel

changes curtailed progress.

It is impractical to move teachers and administrators every 5 years; we need to build Aboriginal vision, mission, within the schools. This goal is not always seen from the board office.

Cree language teachers need to feel part of the school community- sometimes I feel left out by not being part of a regular classroom.

Eliminating racism in the school system

Breaking down the stereotypes, maybe racism, educating people is our biggest challenge.

There is a lack of awareness, and a stereotypical view that all Indians are the same.

Some parents question my ability as an Aboriginal teacher to teach their kids.

Educating the whole community about Aboriginal issues

Not enough time is spent on learning about Aboriginal people, Aboriginal history.

Aboriginal teachers= descriptions of what promotes them as teachers

The importance of developing personal goals

To be the best human being that you can possible be; have your own self-respect, integrity, dignity, and honour.

Have some fun, do some neat things for yourself, nurture who you are.

Maintaining professional development

Have a really solid support system in place.

Don=t be scared to learn more. Involve yourself in professional development, observe other teachers.

An Aboriginal consultant is helpful.

Sharing goals with other teachers

I respected teachers who would come to me and ask, ADo you think this is appropriate to teach this, whether the Aboriginal community would be offended?@

Teachers, both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal, are here for the goodness of the kids because you care about them and you want to work with them to see if they can do something with their lives.

Aboriginal teachers= suggested solutions to the limitations and constraints they experience in the school system

The importance of building relationships with non-Aboriginal friends

Taking all that wisdom that has been passed on over thousands of years from generation to generation, and sharing that with our non-Aboriginal friends, relatives, they can benefit and grow from what we have to offer.

We have to work harder- to know, understand the different perspectives of people, when it comes to culture, when it comes to values.

The main thing that makes a successful environment is when everybody has that kind of feeling that they are contributing, what they are doing is resulting in good, positive work.

Find those people who will support you, stay away from those who won=t.

The whole province should be involved in diversity training

Diversity training is needed at every level of the system, including trustees.

Classes, e.g. offered by STF, to be able to continue on with your profession.

Change attitudes about Native people from inside the system.

Need sufficient training in classroom management, teaching skills.

Put Aboriginal people in leadership positions

Have Native people in leadership positions, i.e. as superintendents.

Having Aboriginal people in administrative positions, i.e. central office, responsible for Aboriginal programming, culture, spirituality.

Need more Cree-speaking substitute teachers; more Aboriginal teachers in the system.

Alternative education structures

Make Aboriginal education separate, like a third board or like a private school.

We need more opportunities to take field trips to Cree speaking communities.

Researchers= narrative commentary about Aboriginal teachers= constraints and limitations

In the need to address issues of equal representation of peoples and to provide an environment which supports diversity in the teaching profession, Aboriginal teachers often find themselves caught in the crossfire between social ignorance and being hired as professionals with professional responsibilities in the school system. With this hiring practice in place, the participants grappled with confrontations of different dimensions. *AYou are hired as an Aboriginal teacher@* identifies the professional by race and in so doing, diminishes the Aboriginal teacher=s professional

status. One participant stated that the school district called the hiring process for Aboriginal teachers an Affirmative Action Policy. *A We are giving Aboriginal teachers a break@*, said the administrator. Using the words Affirmative Action denigrates the Aboriginal teacher for the implication is that they are not fully qualified professional and the school division is making exceptions based on race. From this social reality, the Aboriginal teacher were also challenged by parents who did not want their children to be taught by an Aboriginal person. The parents questioned the competence of Aboriginal teachers and were leery of the influence that an Aboriginal person might have on their child. An environment where the competence, credibility, and qualifications of an Aboriginal teacher were in question, participants felt self-doubt and anxiety. In fact, for some participants doubts began to surface, *A Why was I employed? Why was I recruited?@*

In general, there appears to be little tolerance for difference which Aboriginal teachers may display in their professional demeanor. In many instances difference became associated with issue of qualifications. Some participants talked about really struggling with being treated both by parents and some of the administrators as if they were not qualified. The situation was such that if the Aboriginal teacher performed tasks *Alike a white person@*, then they were accepted as a qualified professional. But, if their teaching practices reflected Aboriginal ways, then their professional competence came into question. The dilemma created by this dichotomy places the Aboriginal teacher in turmoil. In fact, some felt that if they left their Aboriginality at the door then they would be more accepted as professional teachers. As an Aboriginal person, one is hired with the expectation of contributing Aboriginal culture to the school community. In reality, when

Aboriginal teachers perform in the classroom there is a pressure to conform to A whiteness@. A related dimension to the issue of qualifications stems from differences in training. The TEP programs advocate for the development of Aboriginal knowledge and pedagogical practice. If this different knowledge and pedagogy is communicated in the classroom, then questions begin to arise concerning professional ability. In these ways, the issue of difference translates to an issue of qualification.

Aboriginal teachers are also aware of hiring practices and stereotypes which essentializes them. The practice of hiring Aboriginal teachers includes maintaining A a level of acceptable Aboriginalness@. The participant identified acceptable Aboriginalness as not looking too Native, not speaking with an accent, and generally being A attractive@ in looks. Strong influences of stereotyping still exist when an Aboriginal person cannot answer any and all questions regarding Aboriginal culture; consequently they may be labeled as A *not being really an Indian@*.

Some participants raised the concern that the education system was turning to them to mend a post-colonial society and to create change from a subordinate position. This is not possible. As well, the participants felt caught in their role as teachers and could not foresee opportunities to advance to administration where decision making might become an instrument for change.

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Suggestions which could be implemented at the Provincial level:

Commitment to cross-cultural education

Commitment to cross-cultural education as a way of making people aware of the history of Aboriginal people.

Strengthen and promote the Aboriginal culture, maybe spiritually.

Education of non-Aboriginal students to realize that Native people don=t hunt for buffaloes, use horses as transportation, etc.

Implementing cross-cultural education across the province, year round.

Active recruitment of Aboriginal teachers and administrators

There should be equity in the provincial school system; we must hire more Aboriginal teachers and quit relying on just a few people- actively recruit people of Aboriginal ancestry.

There should be more Aboriginal teachers in administrative positions.

Recognition of previous work

Begin to implement the results of many studies that have been done in the province.

Ensure the recognition of Native intellect, histories.

Self-government issues

A charter school for First Nations people.

To become educationally autonomous.

Let our people take care of them(selves), nurture them back to health, so the rest of the community will be strong.

Moving away from separation

We have to move away from segregating ourselves. I think we don=t need this any longer. I think we are strong enough as a people to walk among them and not get destroyed.

Teacher education issues

Every one of these teachers who had a degree should have a class on cross-cultural education, because you can=t tell me that you will never meet Aboriginal students. You owe it to

non-Native students to teach them the treaties, the culture.

We need cross-cultural classes at university; professional development days, conferences are all beneficial.

The Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program helped me reclaim all of who I am.

We need to actively teach about diversity that will become part of the curriculum.

I don=t think we should continue to have separate teacher education institutions. I think things have evolved beyond that now. I think they were useful for the time when we needed them to get back some of the lost information, lost knowledge, lost sense of power and influence. Now, we need to move beyond that. There aren=t enough resources to have two parallel systems.

Educate non-Aboriginal teachers to help them better understand Aboriginal students, to know where they are coming from so that we can better understand the problems and concerns that maybe non-Aboriginal teachers have.

Board/division level

There needs to be more trust between Aboriginal teachers and the Aboriginal consultant; the position shouldn=t be a token one.

Open up a position as a superintendent for Aboriginal education within every division- to help improve Aboriginal programming.

We need more Aboriginal counselors and social workers, especially in inner cities where there is drug abuse, alcohol abuse, sexual abuse, poor housing, unemployment, single parents,

young kids out of control.

Greater emphasis on language.

Balance Aboriginal enrollment with Aboriginal teachers; strengthen Aboriginal programming.

For [a school] to be an associate school, away from the Catholic system to become a cultural institution, more than just the arts; to include languages.

School and classroom level

School administrators- should keep informed of the issues, engage the staff in meaningful planning of the school, establish the school climate, develop a more collegial approach, develop a sense of ownership, don=t be scared to involve parents in school.

Freedom to run the school, to run programs, to allow students first-hand knowledge and guidance from Elders.

Community schools are important- the community gathering environment; people doing things together.

Have a vision so the staff will move in the same direction, working together, reaching for the long term goals.

A lot of cross-cultural workshops for all teachers, possibly implementing materials, having teachers at all levels teach positive things about Aboriginal people. (Non-aboriginal teachers are still asking Aboriginal teachers to deal with Aboriginal children because they don=t know how.)

Personal level

If we can find in our hearts to value ourselves as being who we are and show it to the children, and at the same time value who they are, so they can learn from one another. That we are in education to work with children is because we care and love them, they really need that. These children need a safe, secure and wonderful place to be in.

Be a model for Aboriginal students, to help them to see they could aspire to that type of the positions if they so desired.

Help students deal with their emotions, their experiences, their feelings and help them come to terms with the positive part of the culture, the spirituality that they have traditionally, then do the academics.

Get to know people for who they are, and then get to understand what they think and what they believe in.

A healing initiative- take families in crisis, immerse them in their culture and tradition as a healing process- work with them to work out their problems, to give them support.

Be proud of their Aboriginal ancestry, to reclaim that.

Researchers= narrative commentary on hopes for the future of cross-cultural education in Saskatchewan

As a research team we found it surprising that our participants expressed their hopes, dreams, and changes to the quality of their environments without requesting additional funding from the province. The participants seemed to think that the way to realize what they envisioned was contingent upon changing attitudes and behaviors within the heart of all individuals

throughout the educational system. The participants believed strongly that it is incumbent upon us as human beings to build a strong cross-cultural and anti-racist environment in which to educate all children in Saskatchewan. Money will not change attitudes. The participants appeared to be more than willing to work within the system to make requisite changes for the improvement which they seek.

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Summary of Responses to all Questions

Introduction - Role expectations for Aboriginal teachers

The path to becoming a teacher was different for each of the participants being interviewed. Some had careers prior to entering a teacher education program. Some were parents. Some teachers switched to the TEP programs after completing courses in Arts and Science, while other teachers did not go through the TEP programs at all. Those who attended the Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs made positive comments about the contribution of the programs in helping them to better understand themselves and their culture. Some had childhood aspirations to become a teacher, while others chose teaching later in life. The path to becoming a teacher for some began with their first day at school. Other Aboriginal teachers experienced school life which was unpleasant and this led to a desire to make school a positive place for all children. In the words of one participant, *A I wanted to give students what I didn=t have.@*

Aboriginal teachers have been expected to be experts on Aboriginal cultures, role models,

and counselors. As mentioned previously, Aboriginal teachers have been asked for information about culture and ideas for teaching culture in classrooms but have not been asked to give help in math or science. Some non-Aboriginal teachers have lumped together all Aboriginal peoples, assuming that an Aboriginal teacher can provide knowledge about all nations= cultures even though that they may not be from that nation. Aboriginal teachers have also been expected to handle situations with Aboriginal students who are not in their own classrooms merely because they share the same ancestry. Many of the teachers interviewed stated that they were viewed as role models for Aboriginal students, to show them that they could aspire to professional careers.

Further to their classroom responsibilities, some teachers have been expected by administrators and health care professions to be counselors. These duties involved making home visits, discussing health issues with parents, and monitoring truancy.

What are Aboriginal teachers= experiences in working with non-Aboriginal colleagues?

Relationships with non-Aboriginal teachers have been both positive and negative. Some of the positive experiences for Aboriginal teachers have been a sharing of resources, everyone seeing each other as equals, socializing in sports or the arts. The relationships have tended to be more positive in schools where A priority hiring@ had ensured that non-Aboriginal teachers placed there had expressed interest in working with Aboriginal students.

Generally, Aboriginal teachers are a minority in their schools. Often there is only one in a school or occasionally two. Some of the participants experienced ostracizing and racial grouping which resulted in feelings of isolation and exclusion. Some teachers felt they were not part of the staff due to different personal and recreational interests. Communications patterns often differ.

Non-Aboriginal teachers tend to speak *Afast and to the point@*, whereas Aboriginal teachers may tend to speak in a different cadence and more reflectively. Also, some Aboriginal teachers struggled with having people listen when they were speaking in a group. A common concern among the participants was that non-Aboriginal teachers may view the teacher education received in the TEP programs as inferior. In addition, the non-Aboriginal teachers may believe that Aboriginal teachers have been hired because of their ancestry only, rather than for their teaching ability. Aboriginal teachers are seen as resources for teaching units on Native culture; however, non-Aboriginal teachers may be reluctant to introduce discussion on social issues or justice matters in teaching Native content and perspectives.

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What are Aboriginal teachers= experiences in working with administrators?

Aboriginal teachers have experienced varied relationships with administrators, colleagues, parents, and school support staff. Some teachers commented that they preferred to work with other Aboriginal teachers because they are afraid that non-Aboriginal teachers will use comments against them, or they find it difficult to relate to non-Aboriginal teachers. Additionally, their preferences for social activities outside school may be different; this contributes to fewer common interests to talk about during school hours.

In discussing positive relationships with administrators, Aboriginal teachers have mentioned the encouragement which they received to advance their careers. For example, some participants were encouraged to pursue a graduate degree, to seek membership on committees, or to conduct teacher-inservice workshops. Some administrators have provided opportunities for Aboriginal

teachers to interact with superintendents, directors of education, and members of the department of education. Other positive attributes experienced by the Aboriginal teachers included having administrators who listen empathetically, communicate clearly, and display a genuine interest in learning and understanding about Aboriginal issues and cultures.

The Aboriginal teachers experienced difficulty with administrators who lacked clear communication skills which impacted relationships throughout the school environment. Administrators who lead with an authoritarian leadership style were viewed as distressing. Some administrators may not support the Aboriginal teacher when dealing with thorny parent-teacher issues. Administrators who fail to address racist attitudes and comments in the work environment place the Aboriginal teacher in a vulnerable and personally diminishing position.

Both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal parents have been supportive of the participants. Aboriginal parents have been open and non-threatening to Aboriginal teachers, and home visits have been productive. Non-Aboriginal parents have expressed gratitude that their children have learned so much from the teacher. Other comments have included appreciation that the teacher has given them valuable skills and that the teacher took the time to include thoughtful comments on how the students could improve their learning.

There have also been negative comments from non-Aboriginal parents. Some parents have expressed concerns about the qualifications of TEP graduates and the emphasis on presenting an Aboriginal world view. One Aboriginal parent did not want their child to learn the native language based on their own childhood experience of being told that it was inferior. Some parents did not want the teacher to include specifically Native spirituality because they felt that could be taught at home by elders.

While relationships with support staff such as secretaries and janitors was not within the scope of the interview questions, particularly negative relationships with secretarial staff were mentioned by several teachers. This led to the suggestion that all school personnel should have some cross-cultural training.

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What are Aboriginal teachers= opinions about what promotes or limits them as teachers?

Racism from staff members, students, and parents has been experienced by Aboriginal teachers. Support staff, colleagues and administrators have attributed stereotypes of some Native peoples to all Aboriginal teachers. Some staff members have made demeaning comments about the way Aboriginal people live or about the names of their children. Administrators sometimes do not check negative comments made in staff rooms which criticized Aboriginal people. A further limitation reiterates the point that some teachers believe that Aboriginal professionals are hired only to fulfill equity mandates.

Students have also conveyed their reluctance to learn about racism and the Aboriginal world view. Students may balk at learning about AIndian@ motifs or symbols. One teacher also shared a classroom experience of an Aboriginal student refusing to read a book because it was about white people.

How do Aboriginal teachers culturally negotiate curriculum?

Beginning teachers commonly adhere to the provincial curriculum guidelines and do not add Aboriginal content until they feel confident that administrators and parents will be receptive. As

they gain teaching experience, Aboriginal teachers become more flexible in interpreting the curriculum and begin to integrate an Aboriginal perspective in their teaching practice. Some schools offer a more supportive environment for this process than others.

The availability of curriculum support materials is improving, however some teachers find that they rely on their own materials and experiences. With teaching experience, the participants became more discriminating about choosing resources that met the needs of their students. Some teachers commented on the need for increased cultural resources available through school libraries. Many teachers enhanced curriculum through guest speakers, talking circles, ceremonies, feasts, elders, dancers, drummers, and field trips. In some schools there were elders available to guide the teachers and students in culture and spirituality.

There are differences in the knowledge that children bring to school. For example, some children have been exposed to traditional ways, while some have only experienced urban life. Therefore, off-site trips for children to experience the language and culture of their people is beneficial.

In some schools, Aboriginal teachers act as resource people and experts on Native culture but not as experts in mathematics and the sciences. Often, there are expectations of Aboriginal teachers to take the leadership role in cultural programming within the school system; similar expectations are not placed on non-Aboriginal teachers. Sometimes, Aboriginal teachers are expected to assume the responsibility for all Aboriginal children in the school because non-Aboriginal teachers are unfamiliar in handling cross-cultural interactions.

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What are Aboriginal teachers= hopes for the future of cross-cultural education in Saskatchewan?

Views for the future of cross-cultural education have also varied. One teacher stated that Aboriginal people should move away from segregating themselves and that there are not enough resources to sustain two parallel education systems. At the other end of the spectrum, one teacher expressed a desire for a school outside of the system that would become a cultural institution with Aboriginal arts and languages. Similarly, another teacher suggested that the Aboriginal people nurture themselves back to health through a healing process which would immerse them back into their culture and traditions. One teacher stated that Aboriginal people should have the freedom to administer their own schools and programs which would strengthen and promote the Aboriginal culture and would allow students first-hand knowledge and guidance from elders.

Also included by some of the teachers was a suggestion that cross-cultural education should be a priority in order to facilitate an understanding of Aboriginal students and their issues. Cross-cultural education should be implemented for all teaching professionals.

Several teachers suggested that more Aboriginal teachers need to be hired into the system, rather than relying on the few that are currently teaching. The hiring of Aboriginal teachers needs to reflect the demographic reality of the classrooms in Saskatchewan. In an effort to improve programming for students, Aboriginal professionals are needed in administrative positions within every school division.

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Conclusions and Recommendations

This section was developed collaboratively by the research team, who first identified the issues raised by the teachers. We then developed recommendations based on participants' issues and suggestions. It is important to note that there is considerable overlap between these issues and concerns, as illustrated in the model below:

ELTON - ADD "MODEL" HERE..... INTERLOCKING CIRCLES

importance of an implementation plan

intercultural communication

school climate

roles of Aboriginal teachers

curriculum development and implementation

recruiting and placement practices

In general, Aboriginal teachers expressed their desire to have schools move away from a monocultural to an intercultural perspective, and were prepared to engage in dialogue with non-Aboriginal colleagues about ways in which this might happen. The research team considered that a number of the issues noted by participants may stem from the mismatch between Aboriginal teachers' goals of social transformation and the more pragmatic goals of the provincial school system. Aboriginal teachers often chose teaching as a career because they wished to transform

schools into institutions where social justice is a high priority, whereas mainstream teachers may have a different perspective in choosing teaching as a career.

Issue 1: Intercultural Communication

Aboriginal teachers reported that communication difficulties created fear and isolation for them. Many felt silenced by criticism of their non-standard dialects and nonverbal communication patterns. Some Aboriginal teachers felt that their own experiences might not be acceptable for school conversations because they did not seem to fit mainstream expectations of a "professional teacher". When communication was open, it was based on respectful mutuality and on shared ownership of communication, where responsibility for understanding was taken on by on both partners in conversation. It is important for both preservice and inservice teachers and administrators to understand how we use language in different contexts and to devise ways to talk about our similarities and differences. The school system needs to encourage communication in a non-assimilationist, non-judgmental mode of discourse. Intercultural dialogues could build understanding of the philosophies and ideologies which people from diverse backgrounds bring to their teaching.

Recommendation: Schools should take the lead in opening up the possibilities of healthy communication across cultures. All people involved in the education system must learn to recognize and value different communicative patterns, and to communicate respectfully across difference.

Note: The school system should organize cultural sensitizing of non-Aboriginal teachers, not ask Aboriginal teachers to organize this. The burden should be on the system, not on Aboriginal

teachers.

Recommendation: The Indian and Métis Research Network, funded through Saskatchewan Education, could support research into intercultural communication in a variety of school contexts, and into innovative participant structures in school settings.

Issue 2: School climate

Many Aboriginal teachers experienced racism and feelings of social exclusion in their schools. It was noted that the racism and exclusion were often not deliberate, but the results of non-Aboriginal teachers' and administrators' ignorance or lack of sensitivity to cultural issues. Some Aboriginal teachers felt a pressure to conform to middle-class mainstream cultural practices.

The role of the administrator was seen as crucial to building a positive school climate for Aboriginal teachers. Aboriginal teachers often had expectations of administrators which were not fulfilled. The school system seems to be interested in maintaining the status quo; Aboriginal voices are not listened to, even though they've been invited in. There is a desperate need to recruit more Aboriginal administrators at all levels in the system. These administrators must be chosen for their qualities as intercultural leaders. There should be an examination of the role of administrators with respect to Aboriginal education, especially in recognizing and fostering the potential contributions of Aboriginal teachers to the school system.

The artificial constraints of school and its hierarchical organization also tend to inhibit relationship-building between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff members. Shared cultural activities may be a place to begin the dialogue about culture, and to establish relationships.

Recommendation: School policies and procedures must contribute to a school climate which values the contributions, needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people.

Recommendation: Schools must have anti-racist strategies in place.

Recommendation: School systems need to make intercultural team-building a priority. The teachers had many suggestions for team-building activities, such as retreats, camping trips and other shared experiences. It would be important to have each school plan the activities appropriate for their own community.

Recommendation: The following should be seriously considered in the selection of school and system administrators:

- ability to model excellent intercultural communication skills
- a declared commitment and record of action towards social justice
- an understanding of the role schools play within the larger society

Issue 3 - The roles of Aboriginal teachers

There is frustration and confusion among Aboriginal teachers as to their role in the provincial school system. In many cases they would like to see themselves as teachers first, and Aboriginal teachers second. However, they feel that many mainstream teachers and administrators expect them to be representatives of a generic "Aboriginal culture" rather than as people with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Both Aboriginal and mainstream teachers need to move beyond

material aspects of culture to understand differences in world view. This approach would make it possible to challenge racist thinking and ideology.

There is still lack of knowledge among mainstream teachers and administrators about Aboriginal histories and cultures. This knowledge gap means that many non-Aboriginal teachers do not recognize diversity among Aboriginal peoples. This may be manifested in the expectation that Aboriginal teachers will be the resource persons for all needs and issues of an Aboriginal nature within a school. Most Aboriginal teachers expressed a willingness to help mainstream teachers with their teaching about Aboriginal perspectives and issues, but were frustrated that the responsibility for teaching Aboriginal content has not shifted over the years to non-Aboriginal colleagues.

Recommendation: Aboriginal teachers need to be treated as teachers with cultural perspectives which they can contribute to the education system.

Recommendation: All teachers in the Saskatchewan provincial education system should be involved in inservice which provides them with knowledge of Aboriginal history and current issues.

The Indian and Métis Professional Development Unit offers such an inservice package. Saskatchewan Education should continue its sponsorship of this initiative, and expand it to include formal certification or accreditation of teachers who complete this inservice training.

Recommendation: Aboriginal teachers should be granted time and resources to engage in cultural activities.

Issue 4: Implementation and development of curriculum

Aboriginal teachers are caught between mainstream and Aboriginal expectations, with very little clarity about how one should be "an Aboriginal teacher". They are negotiating both teaching practices and curriculum content; if there is a lack in both, this is what they are negotiating without direction. Aboriginal teachers are indeed important resources for developing and implementing curriculum and helping other teachers access resources within Aboriginal communities. In order to carry out these roles, Aboriginal teachers need to build their own strong cultural identities. This will support them as they reach out to the Aboriginal community. Aboriginal teachers are committed to good teaching for both mainstream and Aboriginal students: they make a profound and wide-reaching contribution to cross-cultural teaching practice. They are spear-heading cross-cultural education initiatives, despite limited supplies and resources.

Recommendation: Funding should be provided to research and document materials from which to construct locally-developed Aboriginal curricula. Researchers gathering this material will need extended contact with Aboriginal elders in community contexts.

Recommendation: School systems need to recognize and honour the work already carried out by Aboriginal teachers through the publication and distribution of publications which synthesize information about Saskatchewan Aboriginal peoples.

Recommendation: We embrace the initiative by STF and SIFC to produce Aboriginal curriculum

for Saskatchewan schools.

Recommendation: Saskatchewan Education should promote partnerships across provincial and Aboriginal organizations to share information about Aboriginal resources and resource people.

Recommendation: That Aboriginal education be targeted as a focus for professional development in the same way as other curricula.

Issue 5: Recruiting and placement practices

Many Aboriginal teachers expressed concern about hiring and placement practices. Some participants felt that colleagues disparaged their hiring because of perceptions that they had been recruited through affirmative action rather than education equity policies. Many Aboriginal teachers felt that their training in Native Teacher Education Programs was viewed as inferior by colleagues and parents, although they themselves felt that these programs had prepared them well for teaching in cross-cultural and Aboriginal settings. The TEP programs provided different cultural opportunities from the regular education programs in Saskatchewan.

Once hired, Aboriginal teachers felt they had little say in where they taught. Many school systems place beginning Aboriginal teachers in inner-city schools, where there are great challenges because of poverty and limited access to support services. Some Aboriginal teachers would like to work with non-Aboriginal students; others enjoy the idea of a multicultural school.

Recommendation: That the history and goals of the TEPS as university accredited programs in Saskatchewan should be explained to teachers and the general public.

Recommendation: That Aboriginal teachers should be consulted about where they might best make a contribution to education, and that supervisors demonstrate respect for their long term career goals.

Recommendation: That support groups for Aboriginal teachers be encouraged.

Recommendation: There should be Aboriginal people working in all aspects of education in the provincial system. This may be encouraged through strong mentorship programs.

Issue 6: Importance of an implementation plan

It was emphasized over and over again by our participants that they gave support to this project on the understanding that specific actions result from the findings.

Recommendation: The research team believes that this study should be followed by a practical project based on the suggestions made by the Aboriginal teachers with whom we spoke. This team would be prepared to work with a school or school division which would support a focus on intercultural education. Such a project could support and document intercultural communication initiatives, implementation of Aboriginal content and perspectives across the curriculum, and engagement of cross-cultural teams in planning and implementing relationship-building activities.

Conclusion

The writers of this report have kept Aboriginal teachers' thoughts and opinions at the heart of our deliberations. The final recommendations based on teachers' suggestions could be used as a basis for funding decisions in Aboriginal education in Saskatchewan. Teachers have given us an honest picture of their teaching lives in this collective research. If there is truly a desire to transform Saskatchewan schools, the seeds of that transformation are to be found in these Aboriginal teachers' words. In our opinion, Saskatchewan Education is in a position to gather information about current initiatives in Aboriginal education and to pass on that information to Aboriginal teachers who may not be aware that some of the issues they have raised are already being addressed. However, there are many areas of concern which teachers have raised that are not addressed within the Saskatchewan provincial school system. It is our joint responsibility to the Aboriginal teachers of this province to take seriously their deeply considered contributions to this research.

We valued the cross-cultural conversations between and among members of this intercultural group. In our mutual sharing, we have learned more about each other and the varying perspectives we each hold. We believe that we have grown and bonded as educators who are committed to changing the school climate for Saskatchewan peoples. Joining hearts and spirits as mainstream and Aboriginal women working together gives us hope that others will follow in our pathway.

Suggestions for further research

The research team believes that this study should be followed by a practical project based on the suggestions made by the Aboriginal teachers with whom we spoke. This team would be prepared to work with a school or school division which would support a focus on

intercultural education. Such a project could support and document intercultural communication initiatives, implementation of Aboriginal content and perspectives across the curriculum, and engagement of cross-cultural teams in planning and implementing relationship-building activities.

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Appendix A:

Description of the Collaborative Methodology

The research team:

The research team consisted of five women with varying cultural backgrounds, all of whom are involved in cross-cultural education. The team worked collaboratively throughout the research process, from generating the original proposal, through developing the interview questions, interviewing the participants, analyzing the interview data, interpreting the data in a series of collaborative conversations and in contributing to the final report.

Research participants:

Thirty eight Aboriginal teachers were interviewed for this project. Eight teachers were interviewed twice, partly because of time constraints during the first interview, but also because participants thought of further information they wished to pass on to the research team.

The interviews

The interviews were conducted in places convenient to the interviewees. Some were held in the researchers= homes, some in university offices, one or two in restaurants, and a number in teachers= home schools.

As stated in the body of the report, the interviews were conversational in style, and tended to be informal. One strategy which facilitated this was the development of a list of possible protocol questions which would be asked directly of the participants. The researchers= questions, to support data analysis, were not used as interview questions. This enabled the interviewers to use natural language during the conversations. Also, many of the interviewees knew the researchers before this time, so the interviews were mostly comfortable occasions.

All interviews were audio-taped, and participants were told they could turn off the tape recorder at any point during the interviews. The interviews lasted for anything from 1 to 3 hours, with the average being about 90 minutes.

Transcriptions

Ling Zhang transcribed the tapes, which were checked by the individual researchers for minor errors before being returned to the participants for approval. Deletions and additions occurred at this point, and one participant withdrew from the study.

Data analysis and interpretation

Individual researchers read through the transcripts of their interviews, and noted patterns and issues emerging from the data. Researchers interviewed an average of 5 participants each.

Another research assistant, Lee Brodie, categorized the interview data from all researchers by response to particular questions, and these data were returned to the research team. At that point we engaged in an intense period of analysis and interpretation. During a weekend retreat we further categorized the data, and then engaged in an audio-taped interpretive discussion of the coded and categorized data. Ling Zhang transcribed the tapes of these discussions.

One of the most controversial issues for us at this time was the decision about how to present the data without losing the participants= voices. We decided to leave the raw data as unencumbered as possible in the Findings section, and to use our reflective conversations as a counterpoint to their stories.

Preliminary interpretations were rechecked by each research team member who shared additions, expansions, and corrections to the researchers= narrative commentary during a day long meeting. This first draft was distributed to each research team member.

Writing the final report

The research team was asked to add to or delete from the first draft of the final report before our final Awriting day@. At that point, the whole team worked together on the Recommendations and Conclusions sections of the report. These discussions were also recorded and transcribed for use in the final draft.

We also discussed the research process itself during this last session.

To finalize the report, intercultural team members sat side-by-side at computers to refine draft impressions and to generate an interpretation that was true and respectful to the history and culture of the participants. These reflections are reported as the collective narrative of our intercultural team. Following a framework developed by Legare, (1996), the researchers= commentary is presented in a collective voice.

We valued the cross-cultural conversations between and among members of this intercultural group. In our mutual sharing, we have learned more about each other and the varying perspectives we each hold. We believe that we have grown and bonded as educators who are committed to changing the school climate for Saskatchewan peoples. Joining hearts and spirits as mainstream and Aboriginal women working together gives us hope that others will follow in our pathway.

Dissemination

It is the hope of the research team that participants will be able to read this report, and to take part in any action plan which is built on the extensive effort they generously gave to this research project.

Appendix B:

Interview Protocols

Interview protocol for

ADiverting the Mainstream:

Aboriginal Teachers Reflect on their Experiences in the Saskatchewan Provincial Education System@

Initiating questions

It is important that interviewers maintain the conversational approach in interviewing participants. We need Aboriginal teachers to raise issues beyond the ones we have already considered. As stated in the research proposal, we are interested in narratives of teacher experience.

Section One:

Aboriginal teachers= perceptions of their contributions and non-contributions to their teaching environments.

Research questions:

1. How do Aboriginal teachers culturally negotiate curriculum in provincial schools to reflect their perspectives?

2. What are the experiences and attitudes of Aboriginal teachers as they integrate their professional and cultural selves?

Possible initiating questions for the interview:

Tell me something of your own education and background.

Tell me how Aboriginal culture is reflected in your teaching.

Section Two:

Aboriginal teachers= reflections on their relationships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples from any aspect of their teaching experiences.

Research questions:

3. What are Aboriginal teachers= experiences in working with non-Aboriginal teachers?

4. What are Aboriginal teachers= experiences in working with administrators?

Possible initiating questions for the interview:

Tell me about your experiences working with other teachers, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

Describe some of your experiences with school and division-level administrators.

Section Three:

Goals (both short and long-term) now considered possible by Aboriginal teachers as they consider building a positive environment for all peoples.

Research questions:

5. What are Aboriginal teachers= opinions about what promotes or limits them as teachers? What are their solutions to such constraints?

6. What are Aboriginal teachers= hopes for the future of cross-cultural education in Saskatchewan? How might these be implemented?

Possible initiating questions for the interview:

What are your goals for cross-cultural education in Saskatchewan?

How do you think we could reach them?

Researchers= Guiding Questions

These questions will be used when checking transcripts to ensure that all information pertinent to the original research questions has been gathered.

Note: These questions will not be used in a direct question/answer format, in keeping with the conversational approach of this research study.

Section One:

Aboriginal teachers= perceptions of their contributions and non-contributions to their teaching environments.

Background information

Tell me about your own background and education.

- where did you go to school?

- what were some of your experiences?

- do you speak an Aboriginal language?

Where did you receive your teacher education?

What made you decide to become a teacher?

What is your current teaching assignment?

Please give me a broad outline of your teaching career?

- where have you taught?

- how long have you been teaching?

- what types of school have you taught in?

- what have your teaching assignments been?

Do you adapt curricula, materials and teaching style to match your own cultural knowledge and background?

- how do you do this?

What do you think should be the outcome of including Aboriginal history, culture and activities in the classroom?

Section Two:

Aboriginal teachers= reflections on their relationships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples from any aspect of their teaching experiences.

Experiences with non-Aboriginal teachers

Describe typical interactions (both professional and personal) in staffrooms

Have you had interactions outside school with non-Aboriginal colleagues? In what kinds of activities?

Do you feel you have a special role on your school staff?

- what is it?
- what are some examples of how you fulfill this role?
- are you comfortable with this role?

What do you think you, as an Aboriginal teacher, bring to your school?

Do you think non-Aboriginal teachers are comfortable working with you?

- why/why not?

Experiences with Aboriginal teachers

Are there other Aboriginal teachers on your staff?

Do you work more closely with them than with other staff members?

What activities do you engage in with Aboriginal staff members that you don=t participate in with non-Aboriginal colleagues?

Are you part of a teacher network?

- describe the network

- what are the advantages to you of being part of this group?

Experiences with administrators

Describe the administrator you felt was most supportive of you.

- in what ways was that support demonstrated?

What have been your most negative experiences with administrators?

- how might these have been prevented?

Have you ever worked with an Aboriginal administrator?

- describe some of your experiences

What conceptions have administrators had of your role?

Have your administrators been knowledgeable about issues in Aboriginal education?

- could you give me an example of how this was demonstrated?

Do you feel your administrators have treated Aboriginal staff fairly?

- give examples

Have your administrators encouraged you to seek professional advancement within the provincial school system?

Have your administrators encouraged you to give workshops, take further training or apply for a consultant or administrative position?

Have you had the opportunity to influence your professional assignments/activities - for example, choice of school, teaching assignment, committee work, professional development?

Describing your experiences communicating and working with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parents.

Section Three:

Goals (both short and long-term) now considered possible by Aboriginal teachers as they consider building a positive environment for all peoples.

Support/limitations as a teacher

What would most influence you to stay within the provincial school system?

What would make you leave the provincial school system?

What do you perceive to be the differences between working in band-controlled schools versus

in the Saskatchewan provincial school system?

Hope for the future of cross-cultural education

What practical advice would you give to the following groups to help implement your ideas?

- provincial government
- Saskatchewan Education, Employment and Training
- teacher educators (universities and colleges of education)
- school divisions, boards
- consultants, division personnel
- school administrators
- fellow teachers

Appendix C:

Consent Form

Information Letter About the Study:

A**Diverting the Mainstream: Aboriginal Teachers Reflect on Their Experiences In the Saskatchewan Provincial Education System**®.

Dear Teaching Colleagues:

We are interested in learning more about the experiences of Aboriginal teachers within our provincial school system. Saskatchewan Education has funded two teams, through their Indian and

Métis Research Network, to interview Aboriginal teachers about their experiences in the provincial school system.

Our team consists of a group in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan: Angela Ward and Linda Wason-Ellam from the Department of Curriculum Studies, Karla Williamson from the Indian and Northern Education Program, Louise Legare from the Indian Teacher Education, as well as Shauneen Pete-Willett from the Saskatoon Board of Education. We are inviting Aboriginal teachers to be involved in Aconversational interviews@ with us to help answer some of the following questions:

What are the experiences and attitudes of Aboriginal teachers in the provincial system? What are Aboriginal teachers= experiences in working with non-Aboriginal teachers? What are Aboriginal teachers= experiences in working with administrators?
What are Aboriginal teachers= opinions about what promotes or limits them as teachers? What are their solutions to such constraints?
What are Aboriginal teachers= hopes for the future of cross-cultural education in Saskatchewan? How might these be implemented?

The interviews will start with these questions, but will be open-ended enough to enable you to express your opinions about other topics related to the experiences of Aboriginal teachers in our provincial schools. As you can tell, we are hoping to gather information which might help us build a more positive cross-cultural climate in Saskatchewan schools.

Please accept this as an invitation to join us. The consent form on the following page

gives detailed information about how the interviews will be conducted.

We would very much like you to participate in this important project. Feel free to phone any of us if you would like further information.

Yours truly:

Angela Ward, Karla Williamson, Linda Wason-Ellam, Louise Legare, Shauneen Pete-Willett.

CONSENT FORM:

ADiverting the Mainstream: Aboriginal Teachers Reflect on Their Experiences In the Saskatchewan Provincial Education System@

Please read the following guidelines which are designed to safeguard the interests of everyone taking part in the study.

1. You will be interviewed at least twice by the same team member. Each interview will last about one hour.

2. Each interview will be audiotaped. You may turn off the tape recorder at any time during the interview.

3. After you have been interviewed each time, the interview will be transcribed and analyzed to discover the major ideas which were discussed.

4. You will be able to check the transcriptions and delete anything you do not wish to be quoted in the study.

5. The tape recordings made during the study will be erased when the study is finished.

6. Teachers= names and locations will not be used in the report or in any articles or presentations based on this study unless you expressly request this.

7. Participation in the study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. If this happens, the tape recordings and interview data will not be used.

8. Any questions about the study can be directed to Angela Ward (966-7585); Linda Wason-Ellam (966-7578); Karla Williamson (966-7678); Louise Legare (966-7688) or Shauneen Pete-Willett (683-8326).

I, _____ understand the guidelines above

(please sign your name)

and agree to participate in the ADiverting the Mainstream@ study of Aboriginal teachers=

experiences in Saskatchewan provincial schools.

Date: _____

Researcher=s signature: _____